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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 005898

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [MD](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA-MOLDOVA RELATIONS: BACK ON TRACK?

REF: MOSCOW 4828

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells.
Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary. While evaluating Russia-Moldova relations without the Transnistria conflict is difficult, there are a few signs that the GOR is continuing its efforts to "mend" the bilateral relationship through economic and other means. The MFA told us that Russia is hopeful that frequent high-level meetings and regularized Intergovernmental Commission sessions could promote a better bilateral relationship. On Transnistria, GOR official insisted that without the direct contact between Moldovan President Voronin and Transnistrian leader Smirnov, the conflict will remain frozen. The MFA expressed concern over deteriorating Moldovan-Romanian relations. End summary.

Continued Progress in Bilateral Relations

¶2. (C) MFA Second CIS Department Director Viktor Sorokin during a December 18 meeting maintained that notwithstanding the situation in Transnistria, the GOR is trying to improve the bilateral relationship with Moldova on a pragmatic basis (reftel). Putin and Voronin already met four times this year while another round of economic talks through the Intergovernmental Commission just concluded in Moscow. Although Sorokin told us that President Voronin is scheduled to visit Moscow in January, local press reported that Voronin will travel to Moscow December 21-22 to discuss customs regulations with a few other CIS leaders, including Nazarbayev and Lukashenko. Some press reports also hinted that a Putin-Voronin meeting was scheduled in advance to discuss Kosovo implications on the Transnistria conflict.

3, (C) Sorokin positively characterized negotiations on Russia's ban on Moldovan wine, noting that besides the 17 Moldovan wineries which have begun bringing Moldovan wines to Russia, many more companies are already undergoing "quality inspection" for import. He said that the GOR hopes to expand bilateral trade beyond the current Russian imports of wine, fruits, dairy products and meat, and exports of oil and gas. Sorokin pointed out that the humanitarian aid of grains and fuel during the 2007 summer drought in Moldova, which the GOR dispatched at the request of the Moldovan government, helped warm the relationship.

Transnistria Still Frozen

¶4. (C) Sorokin insisted that as long as there is no direct contact between Voronin and Smirnov, aimed at resolving the conflict, Transnistria will remain frozen. All other "players" could only "help" but not "resolve," he added. Sorokin said that the GOR is frustrated with the attitude of both parties who "wait for others to solve the problem for

them." He regretted that the Kozak document did not go forward and stressed that since then, no positive movement has happened. Separately, Deputy Director of the CIS Institute Vladimir Zarikhin, who advises the Duma International Relations Committee, claimed that Transnistria is "artificially" frozen. Unlike other regional conflicts, Transnistria has no component of ethnic, religious difference and IDPs, while privatization happened after the break-up, lending itself more easily to the resolution. Zarikhin warned that the GOR will apply Kosovo as a "model" for Transnistria.

Moldova-Romania Relations

15. (C) Sorokin expressed concern with the deteriorating relationship between Moldova and Romania. He criticized the Romanian government for treating Moldova like a younger brother -- an "unhelpful" gesture. Sorokin said that the relationship is "not simple" and needs to be tended carefully.

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